

For Use of Monroe Institute of Applied Sciences
Training Out-of-Body Experiences in the Sleep Lab:
Preliminary Observations

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Introduction

We have established a small study to explore the use of dreaming sleep (REM periods) for the induction of out-of-body experiences (OBE's) in trained subjects. A significant amount of data suggests that the "trance state" from which OBEs occur is very similar to the physiology of REM sleep (paralysis, penile erections, etc.). We are investigating the use of this natural REM state for the induction of and training in OBEs. Our participants are mental health professionals and students who have expressed personal interest in these studies. Their participation is voluntary and unreimbursed. Our goals are to explore this hypothesized relationship between REM sleep and OBEs, to attempt to provide veridical data in support of OBE phenomena, to facilitate OB induction, and to explore differences in clairvoyant remote viewing and OBEs.

Method

Training Procedures

All participants use, at their own discretion, Monroe's Discovery Tapes and manual. Particular emphasis is placed on dream recall and pre-sleep suggestions to become conscious during natural REM sleep. Several readings in the OBE literature and group discussions of fears, experiences, training suggestions, etc. are also important elements of the training procedure.

Sleep Lab Procedure

Participants, as part of their training, also spend some nights in a sleep lab hooked up to a polygraph monitoring eye movements (EOG), brain wave activity (EEG), and muscle tone (EMG) according to standard sleep lab procedure. Using sleep lab techniques, the experimenters signal the sleeping subject when he is in REM sleep. The sleeping subject signals back to the experimenters if the initial signal was perceived by clinching his teeth together in a prearranged pattern. The polygraph records this signal demonstrating that the sleeping subject is consciously in REM sleep. From the consciously experienced REM state, the sleeping subject is to attempt to get out-of-body. (See Figure 1 for the polygraph record of this two-way signaling.)

A target object, randomly and blindly selected, in another room is used to attempt to obtain some veridical data supporting possible OBEs. If a sleeping subject, for example, reports the subjective experience of an OBE and can accurately identify the objective target, some evidence will be available that will differentiate an OBE from a dream or hallucinated experience.

Preliminary Results

In several subjects, we have demonstrated that the two way signaling in REM sleep can take place. As our results, at this point, are preliminary and based on only a few subjects, the experience of one subject in his second night in the sleep lab will be presented.

The subject, Rick Martin, is a corrective therapist, married, 28 years of age with a long interest in American Indian mysticism. During this second night in the sleep lab, he experienced an unusually large amount of REM time with 6 REM periods (REMPs). In each REM, he clearly signalled back to the experimenters after receiving his cue that he was in REM sleep. Throughout the REMPs, he described awareness of paralysis, calling it "novacaine effect," eye flutterings (rapid eye movement bursts) and various sensations of vibrating.

During the second REM, Rick described a heavy set, robed monk walking with him in the desert and then into a Tibetan temple. Rick was able to "click" in and out of this dream cognition and back to his bed. He described this mental control of dream content in several REMPs. At one point, after unsuccessful attempts to induce an OBE, he found himself briefly out-of-body examining the walls in the sleep lab. He describes hearing the Tibetan monk tell him, "We have allowed you to experience many things and now will teach you how to do them yourself." Rick was able to return to this monk several times during the night in different REMPs.

Later REMPs were mixed with regular dreaming content, conscious awareness of sleeping, and experiences of being in darkness, in "a void" out-of-body. At one point, in his 6th REM, Rick described meditating near the Tibetan temple and aware of a tunnel behind him through which he could see changing images. He was not able to enter the tunnel although he wanted to enter. Later during this last REM, he experienced another period of "darkness" and then found himself out-of-body hovering in a corner of a room looking at some dark tile with plastic foam on it. He could direct his movement to some degree but was unable to get to the target area.

After awakening in the A.M., Rick was shown 10 pictures, one of which was the target. He correctly picked the target, a hand held calculator, and described having seen it float beneath him during one of the periods of "darkness" during his REMPs.

Discussion

This one night is open to many interpretations. Rick felt subjectively out-of-body at different times during the night and felt that the REM state provided access to this experience. The out-of-body state was described as significantly different from ordinary dreaming. He did correctly name the target (one in ten probability level), but whether this experience reflects clairvoyant remote viewing, out-of-body perception, or lucky guessing is subject to one's own theoretical biases and belief systems. We see this data as intriguing and, at the very least, suggestive that our methods may be useful in allowing easier access to dreaming and possible parapsychological experiences in sleep-related states of consciousness.

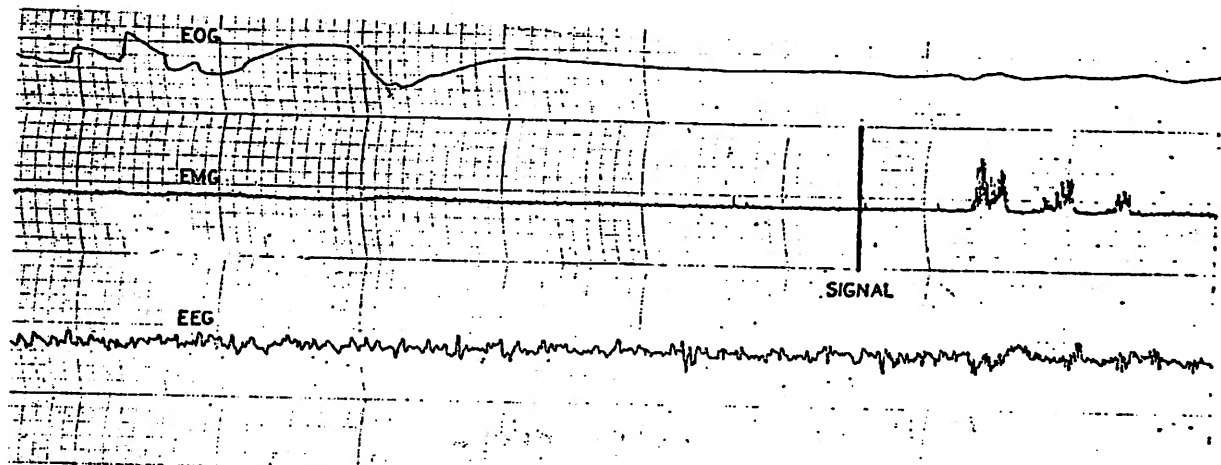


Figure 1. Polygraph data of volitional responding to a signal in REM sleep. Upper left EOG tracing depicts a REM burst. Far right EMG channel demonstrates three teeth clinches in response to an auditory signal.